

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 873

By Herron

A RESOLUTION to recognize Jake Laham on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those citizens who, in their years of work, have distinguished themselves in their respective fields and have brought honor to Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Jake Laham of Paris is one such estimable person who, at the age of eighty-three, has decided to end his sixty-year career as an Umpire, a career in which he called 8,179 games, quite possibly a national record; and

WHEREAS, on May 26, 1943, Mr. Laham called his first baseball game while serving in the United States Army in World War II; sixty years later, on May 27, 2002, he will be honored by the Henry County Umpires Association for his lifelong dedication to the sport of baseball; and

WHEREAS, as a young boy, Jake Laham showed much promise as a budding baseball player until, at the age of fourteen, he was seriously injured when a delivery truck pinned him against a building, almost costing Mr. Laham the use of his legs; and

WHEREAS, Jake Laham so loved the sport that even the crushing injury to his legs could not keep him from stepping up to the plate once again; on August 29, 1934, he begged his coach to let him pinch-hit for a weak hitter, slapped the ball over the shortstop's head, limped to first base, and led his team to capture the Michigan State Title with a score of 9-7; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Laham went on to play Minor League Baseball in the Washington Senators' System from 1938 to 1942, but at the time he was discharged from the Army in 1946, he was the property of the Philadelphia Phillies; and

WHEREAS, during his tour of duty in the United States Army during World War II, Jake Laham played baseball on Army teams; his career as a professional baseball player came to a sad end, however, when he leapt down from a pole to avoid enemy fire, seriously damaging his ankle as he fell to the ground; and

WHEREAS, although he could no longer actively play the sport, once his ankle healed, Mr. Laham volunteered his services in any capacity to the Army Baseball Club and was subsequently asked to serve as an Umpire; and

WHEREAS, after his discharge from the Army, he went to Umpire school; his first assignment was in the Cotton States League in Tupelo, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, Jake Laham became a teacher in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area and umpired in AA ball in the Central League for several years; and

WHEREAS, he also worked in the All-American Girls' Baseball League and as an Umpire in the Negro League until its demise in 1957; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Laham taught in the Grand Rapids School System for twenty-six years, piloted a home renovation project for the Ottawa Hills High School District in Michigan for one year, and then became manager of the Ottawa Hills High School Auditorium for six years, retiring in 1981; and

WHEREAS, throughout his teaching career, he umpired high school, college, and American Legion baseball and softball games; and

WHEREAS, from 1957 to 1978, Jake Laham was the General Manager of a semiprofessional team in Grand Rapids which became the National Champion in 1960 and 1970; and

WHEREAS, after his retirement, Mr. Laham and his wife, Marilyn, moved to Henry County to be near their daughter where he quickly resumed umpiring; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that this General Assembly should celebrate Jake Laham's extraordinary sixty-year career as an Umpire with him, his family, and his community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we extend to Jake Laham our congratulations for an accomplished career as an Umpire and offer to this distinguished Tennessean our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling life away from the baseball diamond.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we wish him every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.